



Stefan Iavors'kyi (1658-1722)

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Poet; Religious leader; Religious writer.

Active - in Russia; Ukraine; Poland

Stefan Iavors'kyi (Stefan Yavorsky; Polish: Stefan Jaworski; 1658–1722) was a Ukrainian and Russian writer, scholar, hierarch of the Orthodox Church, politician, bibliophile, and patron of educational institutions and literature. He was one of the major representatives of baroque poetry and intellectual life in Ukraine in the second half of the seventeenth century. In the first years of the eighteenth century he co-operated with Tsar Peter I and was responsible for the reform of the Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire. He wrote in Latin, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Church Slavonic.

Iavors'kyi was born Simeon Ivanovych Iavors'kyi in 1658, probably in Iavoriv (Jaworów) in the Ruthenian Voivodeship in the Kingdom of Poland (now western Ukraine). We do not know much about his family. His parents were Orthodox and their mother tongue was probably Ruthenian (Ukrainian). They probably either belonged to the gentry (*szlachta*) or were burgers. Shortly after 1667, they probably moved from Poland to the Cossack Hetmanate in central Ukraine. The Hetmanate was subordinate to Russia at this time but with a high degree of independence, with its own army, economy as well as a highly developed culture. The culmination of the political and cultural development of the Hetmanate coincides with the rule of Hetman Ivan Mazepa (1687–1709). It was thanks in large part to his patronage that Kyiv became a major center of religious and cultural life in Eastern Europe.

The family of Iavors'kyi settled close to the town of Nizhyn, some 140 km northeast of Kyiv. From that time Iavors'kyi considered Nizhyn to be his homeland. In the 1670s, Iavors'kyi moved to Kyiv where he studied at the Kyiv-Mohyla Collegium (later Academy). Founded in 1632 by the Orthodox archbishop Petro Mohyla (Movilă; Mogila; 1596–1647), the collegium was the only humanistic school in the East Slavic world at the time. It was based on Polish Jesuit models and the standard of education was high. The rector of the college during Iavors'kyi's student days there (and for long time after, until 1689) was Barlaam Iasins'kyi (Jasiński; 1627–1707), a significant figure in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the future archbishop of Kyiv. Iasins'kyi became Iavors'kyi's mentor and patron.

In 1684, Iavor'skyi wrote and published his first book, *Hercules post Athlantem* [Hercules after Atlas], a long panegyric in Polish and Latin dedicated to Iasins'kyi. The metaphorical title refers to Mohyla (Atlas), the founder of the collegium, and Iasins'kyi (Hercules). Iavors'kyi depicts his patron as a reviver of the collegium's former glory, and that of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in general. The panegyric is divided into three parts, each of which consists of a Latin speech with parts written in the form of an elegium, and a long Polish poem. Such a combination of prose and verse was a novelty in Ukrainian literature at the time. In the Latin sections

Iavors'kyi was inspired by classical authors, while in the Polish verses the main source of inspiration was the Polish poet Jan Kochanowski, especially his *Treny* [*Laments*] (1580).

In that same year, Iavors'kyi embarked on an educational journey to Poland and Lithuania. The journey was recommended by Iasins'kyi, who himself had studied in Poland in his youth. Iavors'kyi spent almost five years abroad. He studied philosophy and theology at the Jesuit colleges of Lviv, Lublin, and Poznań as well as at the University of Vilnius. In order to do so, he decided to convert to Uniatism, whereupon he took a new name, the Polish Stanisław. His studies in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were a formative experience for him and greatly influenced both his future literary and public activities as well as his views on the church. He gained a thorough knowledge of Catholic theology, which he applied in his writings on the Orthodox Church. While a student, he came to the conclusion that the greatest threat to the Orthodox faith was Protestantism and that Catholic Counter-Reformation theology and Catholic reform might be a useful defense against that threat. Thus his later writings were not only based on Orthodox authors but on Catholic ones as well.

In Poland, he honed his literary skills in Polish and Latin, both in poetry and prose. He became acquainted with literary genres in fashion at the time, especially Polish epic and lyric poetry. He must also have had contact with Jesuit theatre, and he practiced ecclesiastical rhetoric. In his manuscript collection of Ukrainian and Russian sermons are two probably written while he was still a student, one in Polish and the other, about the Catholic saint Francis Borgia, in Latin. He acquired many books during his time in Poland that he later took to Kyiv. In one of them there is a note that confirms that he had a good relationship with the Jesuits: “This book was given to me by the most reverend Tomasz Załęski, a Jesuit, once my fellow-student and my most trusted [friend].” (Rutka, title page).

Iavors'kyi returned to Kyiv in 1689, whereupon he renounced his Catholic faith. He was still supported by the powerful Iasins'kyi, who in 1684 was elected to the post of archimandrite of the Kyiv Lavra, the most important Orthodox monastery in Ukraine, and later, in 1690, the metropolitan bishop of Kyiv. Iasins'kyi persuaded Iavors'kyi to become a monk in the Kyiv Lavra. Iavors'kyi took the tonsure in 1689, and chose Stefan as his monastic name. Thanks to the support of Iasins'kyi, he continued to pursue his academic and ecclesiastical career.

In 1690, Iavors'kyi became a professor at the Kyiv-Mohyla Collegium, where he lectured on rhetoric. The following year he became the *praelect studiorum*, supervising the program of teaching as well as order in the collegium. Later, he was also professor of philosophy (1691–1693) and theology (1693–1697), the most important subject at what was now officially an academy. The manuscripts of his lectures have survived and were published in 1992. A Russian translation of a Latin-language rhetorical manual by Iavors'kyi, *Retorichnaia ruka* [The Rhetorical Hand], is also known. In 1697, he was promoted to the post of hegumen of St. Nicholas's Monastery in Kyiv.

In his administrative and educational work Iavors'kyi relied on Jesuit methods of running a school. He introduced high standards of teaching and contributed to raising the status of the school to that of an academy (university) in 1694. The educational and literary talents of Iavors'kyi were highly praised by his contemporaries. Many Ukrainian and Russian scholars, writers, and politicians were his pupils, most prominently, Feofan/Theophan Prokopovych (1681—1736), a poet, church leader, politician, and future opponent.

Iavors'kyi was a prolific writer. He wrote most of his important works—Ukrainian sermons as well as Polish and Latin panegyrics for Iasins'kyi and Mazepa—between 1689 and 1700.

At the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Iavors'kyi was considered to be one of the best preachers in the Russian Empire. He wrote sermons for important church feasts (e.g., the feasts of St. John and St. Nicholas, the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Feast of the Intercession of the Theotokos), in which, however, he

alludes to political events, particularly in those sermons that he preached upon the request of Ukrainian and Russian politicians, among them Hetman Mazepa and Tsar Peter.

Before 1700, Iavors'kyi preached in Ukrainian, with elements of Church Slavonic, Polish, and Latin. After his transfer to Moscow, his sermons became closer to Russian, but still with elements of these other languages.

Although Iavors'kyi's sermons continue the homiletic tradition of the Eastern Church, they are strongly influenced by Polish Catholic preachers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mainly Polish Jesuits such as Stanisław Młodzianowski, Jakub Olszewski, and Piotr Skarga. In his texts Iavors'kyi follows the rules of baroque rhetoric, wherein the main theme is usually based on a conceit, which is then developed in subsequent parts of the text. To impress his audience, Iavors'kyi appeals to the senses of sight and hearing, uses complex metaphors, evokes many images and examples, and refers to visual emblems. His language, which he uses to try to appeal to his listeners' imagination, is rich and fervent. Iavors'kyi's sermons also have a strong intellectual and especially theological underpinning.

Only one of his sermons was published during his lifetime, *Vinohrad Khristov* [The Vineyard of Christ] (Kyiv, 1698), which he preached to celebrate the wedding of Ukrainian magnates Ivan Obidovs'kyi (Mazepa's nephew) and Anna Kochubeiivna. Around 300 of his sermons—more than 4000 pages—written between 1691 and 1722, have survived to this day in the National Russian Archive in St. Petersburg. Some of them were published in the nineteenth century.

Just after his return to Kyiv, Iavors'kyi published *Echo głosu wołającego na puszczy* [Echo of a Voice Calling in the Wilderness] (Kyiv, 1689), a long panegyric dedicated to Hetman Mazepa. It was an experiment in literary form in the Russian Empire. Written mainly in Polish, which at the time had a high cultural status in Eastern Europe, it contains fragments in Latin. The book-length work is based on a cluster of emblems, with numerous references to allegorical images. The author used several types of Polish verse, among them two typical of Polish epic poetry, namely ottava rima and the thirteen-syllabic Polish alexandrine; also verse is combined with passages in prose. The panegyric is divided into parts, in which Iavors'kyi refers to Mazepa's coat of arms, the history of his family, and his biography. Iavors'kyi establishes Mazepa as a national leader and defender of the Orthodox faith against the Ottoman Turks. The icons (pictures) of the emblems in *Echo* as well as in two later books by Iavors'kyi based on emblems are copperplates made by the highly-regarded Kyivan engraver Leontii Tarasevych.

A year after *Echo*, Iavors'kyi wrote his second work about Iasins'kyi, *Arctos et antarctos caeli Rossiaci* [Arctos and Antarctos of the Russian Sky] (Kyiv, 1690) (here the Latin term “Rossia”—as well as the Polish “Rossyja”—refers to the Ukrainian lands). It was published to commemorate the installation of Iasins'kyi as metropolitan of Kyiv. *Arctos* is another example of Iavors'kyi's heraldic and biographical poetry, with consecutive parts referring to Iasins'kyi's coat of arms. Written, like *Echo*, in both Polish and Latin, it too combines poetry with prose. In it Iavors'kyi expresses the idea that the Orthodox Church and the Kyiv metropolitan are crucial for the Hetmanate.

In 1691, Iavors'kyi published his masterpiece, *Pełnia nieubywającej chwały* [The Fullness of Never Decreasing Glory], the third book dedicated to Iasins'kyi. It was written on the occasion of the consecration of the third cave (underground) church in the Kyiv Lavra, devoted to a mediaeval hegumen of the monastery, and Iasins'kyi's namesake, St. Barlaam. This is the most complex of Iavors'kyi's books and its panegyric form is only superficially similar to that of his previous works. It combines Polish epic poetry with Latin prose and emblems. There are three main topics in the *Pełnia*, namely, the meaning of the monastic life, the relationship between the power of the state and Christianity, and the role of the Orthodox Church in seventeenth-century Ukraine, with Iasins'kyi as its leader. The main section of the book consists of three short epic stories (epyllions) in Polish about three St. Barlaam. The final section, *Mnemosyne*, is a set of metatextual texts about poetry and poets. Here

Iavors'kyi reveals his wit and sense of humor. He addresses the Muses and refers to his close relationship with the patron.

Iasins'kyi probably saw Iavors'kyi as his successor, but the career of his protégé suddenly took an unexpected turn. In January 1700, Metropolitan Iasins'kyi sent Iavors'kyi and Archimandrite Zakharii Karpylovych as his envoys to Tsar Peter I in Moscow. Just after his arrival in Moscow, Iavors'kyi was asked to preach at the funeral of a Russian military commander, Aleksei Semenovich Shein. Iavors'kyi's rhetorical talent and intellectual agility impressed the tsar to such a degree that he ordered Iavors'kyi to stay in Moscow. Peter asked whether Iavors'kyi could be made a bishop of a diocese close to the capital. On 7 April 1700, he was ordained bishop of Ryazan and Murom.

It was at this time that the first conflicts between the Russian church hierarchy and Iavors'kyi occurred. He was accused of having pro-Catholic sympathies and of heresy. This did not, however, interfere with his next promotion. In October 1700, Adrian, the patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' died. Peter decided not to appoint a new patriarch but instead nominated Iavors'kyi as the *locum tenens*. Iavors'kyi did not want to take the position, but he was forced to succumb to the will of the tsar. He performed his duties as the acting patriarch for the next twenty years, until the patriarchate was abolished by Peter in 1721.

In his first years in Moscow, Iavors'kyi was a supporter of Peter's reforms and had a close relationship with the tsar, something confirmed in the partially preserved correspondence between the two. Iavors'kyi modernized his two dioceses (the patriarchal as well as the Ryazan) and filled bishoprics in Russia with western-oriented alumni of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. As protector of the Moscow Theological Academy (established in 1687), he reformed it, using the academy of Kyiv as a model. He appointed a Ukrainian scholar and monk, Theophilact Lopatins'kyi (c. 1670—1741), as its *prefect studiorum* and later rector (1706).

During the Great Northern War (1700—1721), Iavors'kyi strongly supported the tsar. He financed a military ordinariate and preached several sermons to mark Peter's victories. At that time, Iavors'kyi had to make a dramatic choice. Hetman Ivan Mazepa had been a long-standing supporter of the tsar. During the war, however, he took the opportunity to gain full independence for the Hetmanate, and in 1708 took the side of Peter's enemy, King Charles XII of Sweden. Since Charles was a Lutheran, Iavors'kyi excommunicated Mazepa as an ally of heretics. The solemn ceremony took place in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, and it was directed by Iavors'kyi. He was probably the person who composed the emblem-like anathema entitled *Pozornoe ekho vsepagubnago anafemy* [The Magnificent Echo of Omni-Fatal Anathema] (now in the National Library in St. Petersburg) as well as several anti-Mazepa poems.

Iavors'kyi's relationship with the tsar cooled in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Peter's tendency was to subordinate the Orthodox Church to his power. The most difficult question for Iavors'kyi was the tsar's Protestant sympathies. Iavors'kyi, however, never openly opposed Peter and always fulfilled his wishes. His powers as patriarch were illusory, partially because of his weak personality and his lack of political skills. Several times he asked the tsar to dismiss him from his duties and allow him to return to Ukraine or become a monk, but Peter declined.

Although Iavors'kyi did not reveal his political views, he was considered to be a supporter of Tsarevich Alexii, the oldest son of Peter and a political opponent of his father. In 1718, Iavors'kyi was forced to take part in his trial in St. Petersburg. After the tsarevich's death in prison, Iavors'kyi lost any illusions he may have had about the tsar. He was nonetheless compelled to live in St. Petersburg almost until his death.

Iavors'kyi and his political backers tried to prevent his former student, Theophan Prokopovych, from being nominated for the post of bishop of Pskov in 1716. They accused him of favoring Protestantism, but their efforts remained unsuccessful. In his last years Iavors'kyi was attacked by his enemies, especially by

Prokopovych, who became the tsar's right-hand man in the church reforms. In 1721, the patriarchate was abolished in Russia and replaced by the Holy Synod, a collegial body governed by a secular official of the tsar. Iavors'kyi became the first president of the Synod, but without any real power.

In his last years, his main activity was writing, reading, and book collecting. In 1713, he started to write *Kamen' very* [The Rock of Faith], which he finished in 1718. A systematic description of the dogmas of the Orthodox Church, it was the first Orthodox theological treatise in Russia. Its main purpose was a polemic with Protestantism, whose influences in Russia increased in the first decades of the eighteenth century. In his presentation of his ideas, Iavors'kyi applied methods used in Catholic works on dogmatic theology, which he acquired while a student in Poland and Lithuania. At more than 1500 pages, the book was not published until 1728, six years after Iavors'kyi's death, and became a best-seller. Reissued twice (in 1729 and 1730), it elicited a series of polemical responses in Russia and abroad, including the anonymous *Molotok na "Kamen' very"* [A Hammer against the *Rock of Faith*] (1731).

Iavors'kyi continued his work as a preacher. He put his manuscript collection of sermons in order, but it is not clear whether he intended to publish them.

In 1702, he founded the Monastery of the Annunciation in his home town of Nizhyn. Its main baroque church was designed by the architect Grigorii Ustinov and completed in 1715. Iavors'kyi was not allowed by the tsar to go to Nizhyn to consecrate the church until 1716. Shortly before his death, he wrote his will, in which he bequeathed his library to the monastery he had founded.

Iavors'kyi built up his library over more than thirty years. Most of it consisted of more than six hundred books in Latin and Polish, written by leading European writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among them were works relating to Iavors'kyi's profession as a churchman—collections of sermons, works on historiography, anti-Protestant polemics, theological treatises, compendia, and dictionaries. There were also some literary works, mainly in Polish. Of one small volume of Polish and Latin religious poetry he wrote, "*Deliciae meae hoc libellus*" ["This book is my great pleasure"] (Gualterus, Darowski, B recto). Most of Iavors'kyi's books contain his manuscript notes, which prove that he read them. He used to read in a humanistic manner typical of European intellectuals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He would usually read a couple of books simultaneously and switch from one text to another, making notes on the margins and either personalizing them or producing his own texts based on the reading material (Grafton 179–212). The library was transferred to Nizhyn, but in 1731, Tsaritsa Anna Ivanovna decided to hand it over to a new college in Kharkiv, where most of it is now kept in two locations.

The last poetical work written by Iavors'kyi is, fittingly enough, a Latin elegy added to his last will entitled *Possessoris huius librorum luctuosum libris vale* ["A Mournful Farewell to the Books of their Possessor"]. This farewell, which belongs to a long tradition of poetry dedicated to books, is considered to be one of Iavors'kyi's masterpieces and has been translated into several languages.

Ite, meis manibus gestate saepe libelli,
Ite, meus splendor, luxque decusque meum!
Pergite felices, alias jam pascite mentes
Et nectar vestrum fundite nunc aliis!
Hei mihi, quod meus a vobis avulsus ocellus
Non poterit mentem plus saturare meam! (Maslov, 19)

[Go, my books, which often in my hands I held,
Go, my light, my splendour, and my beauty!
Go forth happily and other minds do feed

And pour your nectar out for others now!
Woe is me, because my eyes, divorced from you,
Can no longer sate my mind.] (my translation)

In the last year of his life Iavors'kyi was suspected of conspiring against the tsar. Elderly and ill, the archbishop was interrogated by Prokopovych and some members of the Senate. He died on 27 November/8 December 1722 in Moscow and was buried in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Ryazan.

In Russian and Ukrainian historiography Iavors'kyi is regarded as a controversial figure, both as a politician and church leader. His lack of independence in his relationship with Peter I has affected this appraisal. His role in modernizing intellectual life in the Hetmanate and in Russia is widely acknowledged, but Iavors'kyi's literary output is less known than his public activity. He belongs to the history of three literatures—Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish. His writings combine Latin and Slavic traditions; they are Orthodox but strongly influenced by the Catholic culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Since he wrote in several languages and easily switched among them, his works do not fully fit into the national histories of literature but rather within the concept of world or European literature. The intellectual and artistic level of Iavors'kyi's poems and sermons makes him one of the most intriguing Eastern-European writers in an age of great changes.

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